

\$4 Million Grant to Improve Care Coordination, Strengthen Supports for Youth and Young Adults Impacted by Mental Illness

(COLUMBUS – Aug. 6, 2013) State efforts to strengthen and improve both service delivery and outcomes for transition-aged youth and young adults impacted by severe mental illness will get a boost thanks to a \$4 million “System of Care Expansion Implementation” grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration recently awarded to the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS). OhioMHAS is partnering with the Governor’s Office of Health Transformation and Ohio Family and Children First to oversee the development of Systems of Care throughout Ohio.

Dubbed ENGAGE (Engaging the New Generation to Achieve their Goals through Empowerment), the Ohio project will serve 2,000 youth from all 88 counties over the next four years. The effort builds upon the success of an earlier strategic planning grant and will help guide effective youth-driven and family-guided local systems of care that promote optimal wellness and recovery for youth as they move toward independence and adulthood. Collaboration among government and private agencies, providers, families and youth will strengthen coordination of community-based services and promote improved outcomes. Areas to be addressed in the project include treatment, prevention, wellness, housing, education, employment, respite and life skills.

“Young people are often caught between distinct child and adult mental health systems, which are separated by different policies, funding structures and eligibility criteria. Our goal is to make it easier for youth and their families to navigate systems and access services,” said Tracy Plouck, director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

In Ohio, an estimated 90,000 transition-aged youth and young adults (ages 14-21) have serious emotional disturbances or serious mental illnesses. Yet, adolescents eligible for high intensity services in the children’s mental health system demonstrate low service use in the adult system. Less than half of Ohio’s young adults who need individual counseling after age 18 receive it, and by age 21, only about one third of young adults receive this service. Even when youth have sufficient health care coverage and life skills to access adult mental health services, they may refuse to engage in services that are perceived as unresponsive to their individual needs and life goals.

“We are thrilled that Ohio was selected for this grant. These dollars will enable us to expand the system of care approach statewide, which will lead to improved service delivery for a very vulnerable population,” said Angela Sausser-Short, director of Ohio Family and Children First Cabinet Council. System partners will guide the project under the leadership of the Governor’s Office of Health Transformation.

ENGAGE connects directly to the Kasich Administration’s current efforts of streamlining eligibility, creating Health Homes, expanding housing options, and supporting care coordination and crisis intervention services for youth at risk of harming themselves or others due to a mental illness or developmental disability.

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